



## **Matthew 6:13**

13 And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.'

### **Reflection**

Today's passage contains the sixth and final petition of the Lord's Prayer which rounds out its beautiful symmetry. After an opening address, Jesus' model prayer is perfectly balanced. The first three petitions remind us of our eternal trajecto-

ry as members of the kingdom of heaven. They express our concern for God's glory in relation to his name, his rule and his will. Then the second three petitions express our humble dependence on his grace. In the first half of the prayer we pray for God's glory and his work on earth, and in the second half we pray for his grace towards us and our needs. Jesus would have us hold up both God's glory and his grace in our daily prayer life.

And these last three petitions that Jesus puts on our lips couldn't be more beautifully comprehensive. They cover all our human needs – our material needs in praying for our daily bread, our spiritual needs in praying for the forgiveness of our sins, and our moral needs in praying for deliverance from evil.

We turn today from the fifth petition to the sixth and we find a natural progression between them. The sinner who has just prayed with heartfelt repentance for forgiveness of sins in the past, logically will next pray for deliverance from evil in the future. Here's the pattern for prayer that Jesus us offers us today,

13 And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.'

The first half of this verse appears to present us with a problem. Can Jesus be suggesting that God tempts us to sin? And if so, what then are we to make of passages like James 1:13 which says very clearly:

13 When tempted, no one should

say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;

Jesus’ final prayer point in the Lord’s Prayer is not in conflict with James 1. God does not tempt people to sin, it is the tempter who does that, Satan, the father of lies, the ‘god’ of this age, the prince of our fallen world. He is the source of all evil, and he is the one along with the spiritual beings at his beck and call, and our own traitorous flesh (our sinful nature), that tempts us to sin. So when Jesus encourages us to pray words like ‘lead us not into temptation’ he means ‘Father please guide our steps so that we might avoid the devil’s traps and snares.’ ‘Deliver us from the evil one’ as the verse so naturally follows on.

This final petition in the Lord's Prayer should represent a daily reminder of the spiritual battle that is going on in the world around us. The enemy, the devil, has been defeated at the cross and at the Second Coming of Jesus he will be cast into hell along with the other fallen angels, known as demons in the bible, and all those who die outside of relationship with Jesus. But until that day, even though Satan is doomed, he still exercises dominion in this world. We live in the overlap of the ages. The kingdom of God is here in the person and work of Jesus and yet until Jesus returns it is at war with the kingdom of this world. Hence the tension and difficulty and persecution and suffering that Christians face as we try and live as Christians in a world with very different values to ours. What's more, in battle, when an

enemy knows that they are going to die, they have nothing to lose and so the fight often becomes the fiercest as they try and take as many people with them as possible. This is what Satan is doing. Peter, who Satan sifted and hurt grievously when he denied Jesus three times, later warns us about Satan in this way:

8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

When Satan sifted Peter, Jesus prayed that he would recover and strengthen his brothers. Jesus is teaching us to follow his example in praying for God to lead us away from temptation and deliver us from the traps and snares of the evil one. Pray

this each day, be alert to the danger, and be sober minded as you go out into your day. The devil is real, we're weakened because of our sinful nature and so we need to keep temptation and evil in the forefront of our minds by asking God daily for his help in this area.

Just a final note on the Lord's Prayer before we think over the implications of this last verse for our lives. The traditional ending that many of us know by heart and most churches still include in liturgies is 'For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.' This ending does not come from the bible. We're almost 100% sure that Matthew or Luke never wrote it and that Jesus didn't say it. However it is very old and was likely added to Jesus's words to round out the prayer with a word

of praise to end it. It might have been based on 1 Chronicles 29:11 which David prayed and as a similar ring to it.

Strictly speaking these are not Jesus' words and so you should be aware of that when you say them and base your prayers around them. However, the theology behind these words is very well supported throughout the rest of Scripture so there is no great need to discredit this traditional saying or to feel the need to remove it. As you can see from what we've learnt over the last week or so, the words do indeed round out nicely the sentiments and themes of the Lord's Prayer.

## **Think**

But back to the more serious matters at



hand. Take any time that is available to you right now to meditate over this passage. Why would Jesus have it form part of our daily prayer life? Look around you, at home, in your work life, amongst your circles of friends, at your finances, at your passions and pursuits – be alert and sober minded, where might temptations lie? Where might the devil be setting a trap for you? Long hours in the workplace working late alongside a male co-worker, and niggling arguments with your husband at home? A little too much alcohol on the weekends while watching the footy with your mates and now, more than occasionally, the added spice of a sports betting app on your phone? What's it for you? We all have a chink or two in our armour somewhere and it's almost guaranteed that that's where the devil is going to strike. How will he bait

your hook? Where are you most at risk?

## **Pray**

Then bring these areas of weakness before the Lord in prayer. Pray that he would lead you away from temptation, and if you find yourself in the thick of it, that he would give you the strength not to succumb. Pray that today he would deliver you from the evil of the evil one.